

What Is Claimed Is:

1. A method for operating an internal combustion engine in which a valve needle of a fuel injector is moved from a closing position via an intermediate position to an opening position and back with the aid of a piezoelectric actuator to which a trigger signal (SA) is applied,  
wherein the trigger signal (SA) has a greater slope steepness during the transition of the valve needle from the closing position to the intermediate position than during the transition of the valve needle from the intermediate position to the opening position.
2. The method as recited in Claim 1,  
wherein the trigger signal (SA) has a greater slope steepness during the transition of the valve needle from the opening position to the intermediate position than during the transition of the valve needle from the intermediate position to the closing position.
3. The method as recited in one of the preceding claims,  
wherein the trigger signal (SA), during the transition of the valve needle from the opening position to the closing position, is symmetrical to the trigger signal (SA) during the transition of the valve needle from the closing position to the opening position.
4. A computer program for a control device of an internal combustion engine in which a valve needle of a fuel injector is moved from a closing position via an intermediate position to an opening position and back with the aid of a piezoelectric actuator to which a trigger signal (SA) is applied,  
wherein the computer program is suitable for implementing a method according to one of Claims 1 through 3.
5. The computer program as recited in Claim 4,  
wherein the computer program is stored on an electric memory medium, in particular a flash memory or a read-only memory.
6. A control device for an internal combustion engine in which a valve needle of a fuel injector is moved from a closing position via an intermediate position to an opening position and back with the aid of a piezoelectric actuator to which a trigger signal (SA) is applied,

wherein the piezoelectric actuator, during the transition of the valve needle from the closing position to the intermediate position, is able to be triggered by a trigger signal (SA) having a greater slope steepness than during the transition of the valve needle from the intermediate position to the opening position.

7. The control device as recited in Claim 6,  
wherein the piezoelectric actuator, during the transition of the valve needle from the opening position to the intermediate position, is able to be triggered by a trigger signal (SA) having a greater slope steepness than during the transition of the valve needle from the intermediate position to the closing position.